

NUMBER 2400—OR, “ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE!”
NO. 2400

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Escape for thy life.”
Genesis 19:17

THE Lord Himself said to Lot, “Escape for thy life,” although the command was sent by one of His chosen messengers. God has messengers nowadays, and He still sends by them short, sharp, urgent, stimulating messages like this, “Escape for thy life.” This message was sent in love. God loved Lot and therefore He would save him from the impending doom of Sodom.

I doubt not that this message of love was spoken by the messenger in very solemn tones. I do not know how angels speak, but I am certain that the very heart of the messenger was apparent in the message when he said to Lot, “Escape for thy life.” Whether he whispered it in Lot’s ears, or uttered it in loud accents, I cannot tell, anyhow, I am sure that it was delivered as it ought to be delivered and it had an immediate effect upon the man who heard it, for he was obedient to it.

Now, it may be that God has designs of love towards you who are here, who as yet have never fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you. Remember that the Gospel admonition comes to you fresh from God—it has been in this blessed Book for ages—but it has not grown stale. It still leaps from the mouth of God, filled with all its native energy, and though I who have to deliver it to you may not speak it as I could desire, for I am very feeble, I will at least speak it out of the very depths of my soul, while I try to plead with every unconverted man or woman whom my message may reach—and this shall be the one burden of my pleading—“Escape for thy life.”

I. Notice, first, that THERE WAS NO SAFETY FOR LOT WHERE HE WAS.

He must escape from the doomed city. The angel did not propose to him that he should stop in Sodom and beneath some sheltering arch hide himself from the fire-shower. No, the message was, “Escape. Fly from Sodom. Escape for thy life.” So, to you who are unconverted, we can bring no proposals of hope if you stay where you are. We can hold out no hope to you either in this world or in that which is to come. Neither a lesser nor a “larger hope” do we believe in, apart from your laying hold on eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ. Stay where you are and you are doomed. Remain what you are and you must perish in the overthrow of that City of Destruction which God will certainly burn up before long.

There was no safety for Lot where he was, so, let me say to you who are unbelieving and unconverted, *there is no safety for you in unforgiven sin*. It does not matter what form your sin has taken—whether you have been a profligate or a moralist—as long as the sin you have committed is unforgiven, there is no safety for you.

Whether your sins are as scarlet, or in your judgment, of a milder hue, does not affect the truth of what I say—you must be washed in the precious blood of Christ and pardoned through His great atoning sacrifice received by faith, or else you will die in your sins, and you will be driven to the place where hope can never enter. If you die with your sins upon you—where death leaves you—eternity will find you. Once lost, you will be lost forever. So, there is no safety in unforgiven sin.

And further, *there is no safety in unforsaken sin*. No, you must escape for thy life from every sin. The drunkard cannot be saved and keep to his cups. The adulterer cannot be saved and indulge his evil

passions. The thief cannot be saved and remain dishonest. The only salvation for you is salvation *from* your sins—and that is the salvation that we preach.

How many would like to be saved from the punishment due to sin, and yet to be suffered to go on in the sin. But there is nothing of that kind of teaching in the Scripture. God did not send His Son to be the excuser or the minister of sin, but to be the Savior from sin. There is no hope for you if you stay in this Sodom—you must get out of it—you must clear right away from it.

Perhaps you say, “I will change my place of residence. I will go from the slums of the evil city into the cleaner and more respectable part of it.” I tell you that you have to come right out of it. You must altogether quit the region of sin, you must fly from the realms of iniquity or else you shall be consumed in the destruction of the city. Up and away from all sin! Up and away! Our cry is not, “Hide in a corner,” or “Shift into a better place,” but “Escape for thy life.”

Again, *there is no safety in unbelief*. You may say, “I do not believe this,” but as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, it is true. In my own heart, and soul, and conscience, I know that there is a Judge of all the earth, and that He must do right, and that the day shall come when He will execute vengeance upon those who live and die in sin, for He cannot wink at iniquity.

It is not in the nature of a holy God to suffer sin to go unpunished. You may shut your eyes to this truth, but it is there. You may disbelieve it, but it is there. You may ridicule it, but it is there, and you shall before long know it to be so. You must come out of this state of unbelief if you are to be saved. There is no salvation in unbelief.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” There is to be no flinching in this matter—I am not sent here to please you who do not believe, or to talk with bated breath, as though I sympathized with your unbelief. I denounce it as high treason against the majesty of God and therefore I cry unto you, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel,” for if you will not, you must perish in your unbelief. “If ye believe not,” saith Christ, “that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” There is no safety in unbelief and therefore we say, as the angel said to Lot, “Escape for thy life.”

And once more, let me remind you that *there is no safety in self-righteousness*. If anybody here says, “Thank God, I am no doubter, I am no profligate, I am no open sinner,” I am glad if you can truthfully say that, but still remember, if you trust in your own righteousness, you cannot be saved. You must come out of that condemned city or else you are a lost man.

I spoke with one, this morning, who is, I believe, earnestly seeking salvation, and he said to me, “I have denied myself this and I have cast away that,” and I was pleased to hear it. But I said to him, “You have denied these things to yourself but have you denied yourself? That is to say, have you left off trusting in yourself?”

The hardest self-denial is to deny yourself and get right away from all confidence in your own doings, and feelings, and everything that comes of yourself, for you might as well hope to be saved by your sins as by your good works. The road to hell by human merit is as certain as the road there by human sin.

If you seek, anyhow, to insult the atonement of Christ by setting up your merit as though it were as good as that atonement, or by trying to prove that you do not need that atonement, you are just barring heaven’s gate against yourself. You must come out of that self-righteousness if you would be saved. My only cry to you is, “Escape, escape, escape for thy life, for there is no safety for you where you are!”

II. But now, in the next place, according to this message of the angel, IF LOT IS TO BE SAVED, HE MUST RUN FOR IT AT ALL COSTS—“Escape for thy life.”

First, *he must leave his former comrades*. Have you any jolly companions who are not Christians? “They are bright, lively fellows,” you say. But they are doing you infinite mischief—they are leading you away from God and His Christ. Break loose from them—“Escape for thy life.” Though they seek to hold you back, tear yourself away from them, and even leave your garment in their hands, as Joseph left his in the hands of Potiphar’s wife. “Escape for thy life.” Quit all ill company.

Next, *Lot had to leave his former comforts*. For the sake of comfort, he had gone to Sodom, and doubtless, he had his house well-furnished there. But he must quit it all. Probably it was that excellent house that made Lot’s wife look back—she could hardly relinquish all those nice things of theirs even for life itself.

Beware, when you are seeking Christ, that you do not let your money or your business stand in your way! It will be better for you to enter heaven a beggar than being a rich man, to be cast into hell. It were better for you to be as houseless as the most unpitied waif about whom the wintry winds are howling—it were better for you to die in a ditch and to be saved—than that you should live in a palace and yet after all be cast into hell fire. I charge you, be ready to give up all things, if need be, sooner than lose your soul. “Escape, escape, escape for thy life!”

Yet again, *Lot must not stop to argue*—nor must you. You do not see the danger, you want more evidence, you have objections—to all of which my one solitary answer is—“Escape, escape, escape for thy life!” You have not time for me to discuss your difficulties now. When you are saved, it will be soon enough for us to argue out the moot points, but now, while the fire cloud hovers above your head, escape for your life!

Yonder drowning man will not clutch the rope until I have explained to him the doctrine of specific gravity. O fool, what have you to do with specific gravity when you are drowning? Lay hold of the rope and live! So, there are some who must have election or predestination explained to them, or the doctrine of the human will—they must have this, that, and the other opened up to them, and made clear as daylight. I beseech you, do not be such madmen. Do not trifle with your souls, but escape for your life. That is the one business of the present hour—see to that first and let other matters wait awhile till you are in a fit condition to consider them.

If Lot is to be rescued, *he must, as men say, put his best foot foremost*. It is quite early in the morning, but before the sun has risen much higher, all Sodom and Gomorrah will be destroyed. You have already waited far too long, my unsaved friend, grey hairs are on your head here and there—why will you delay any longer? Did you not catch the solemn tones of our hymn—

*“Hasten, sinner, to be wise,
Stay not for the morrow’s sun”?*

We sang that line over and over again in the different verses—

“Stay not for the morrow’s sun.”

Oh, that God would, in great mercy, press that appeal home upon you! “Escape for thy life!”

Lot must not sit down and take things easy—nor must you. Lot must not begin to crawl at a snail’s pace and amuse himself by looking down every side street of Sodom, as he quits it—but he must run from the doomed city, and you also, by God’s grace, must bestir yourself. You must quit your sin by repentance and lay hold of Christ by faith. God help you so to do!

Oh, that my lips could speak the longing language of my heart and cease to utter the feeble syllables that do not express half what I feel! How can words fully express the burning desires of a soul yearning over sinners? But be you willing to be led, even by my feeble speech, to hearken to God’s almighty voice as He says to you, through me His messenger—“Escape for thy life.”

I cannot help, just by way of parenthesis, pointing out to you the contrast between the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the repentance of the Ninevites. At the command of God, Jonah went though Nineveh and this was all he had to say, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Again, and again, and again, in bitter tones, the prophet cried, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown”—and the whole body of the Ninevites sought for mercy and found it—with nothing to help them to pray

but this, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”

Now, if you have nothing better to comfort you than this, “Who can tell?

*“Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer,”*

why, you have good ground to go upon in approaching your God.

But friends, you are not under such a dispensation as were the Ninevites—I have not to cry to you, “Yet forty days, and you shall be destroyed.” I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life. I have to entreat and beseech you to lay hold on eternal life by believing in the Lord Jesus. Oh, how you ought to welcome such a message as that!

If there is anybody whom I am addressing who is actually marked for death and who knows that he carries about in his body that which must in a very short time bring him to the grave, one who is well aware that he cannot recover from the incurable disease that has seized him—yet, that should not hinder him from seeking God’s face—rather it should move him at once to turn to Jesus.

I can see a man before me now—my mind’s eye can see him and I know that he must die. I am sure of it. Poor wretch, he has been a thief! His hands and both his feet are nailed up, they are bleeding from the cruel nails, and within a short time he must die in agony. Yet I hear him cry out, as he turns his eyes on Jesus Christ crucified, “Lord, remember me.” He is nearly dead and almost in hell, but he cries, “Lord, remember me,” and he is saved—and today is with Christ in Paradise.

Now, you who have a cancer, you who are sick and ill, you who are poor and broken down, and feel as if you must soon die, you who are as great a sinner as the dying thief was, say to Jesus, “Lord, remember me,” and He will remember you. There is no reason under the earth, nor on the earth, nor in heaven itself—there is no supposable reason why you should not pray, and if you pray and seek the Lord’s face, you shall not come to Him in vain, for He has said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” God help you to come now, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake!

III. Now, to conclude, let me remind you that LOT HAD EVERYTHING AT STAKE and therefore the angel said to him, “Escape for thy life.”

Suppose he had stayed in Sodom—*then he would have lost all*. He would not have saved his furniture, or his gold, or his silver—he would have lost all that he had. Suppose you stop your sin—will you really save anything by it? “I shall save myself from thought,” says one. Oh, but do you think you are an ox, or an ass, that thought should be trouble to you? Why, it surely will be your wisdom to addict yourself to the most sedulous care about your eternal interests!

Suppose there should be a cry of “Fire!” raised in this house tonight, as there was but a little while ago in Spitalfields—how many there are who would rush to the doors in a mad panic to escape for their lives! Yet, surely, the soul’s life, the eternal life, is more precious than the life of the body. Will you not make that the first point to be considered and settled—for, if you could by sin gain the whole world, yet what would it profit you when you would lose your own soul?

Again, if Lot had not fled out of Sodom, *he would himself have perished*. Not merely would his garments have been burnt, but he would have perished. Not only would his gold and his silver have melted in the fire, but he would have perished. That was a true saying, though Satan uttered it, “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.” And all that a man has he ought to give for his soul, for the immortal part of his being, for his higher and better nature.

Why, if your soul be cast into hell, it would have been better for you that you had never been born! If you neglect the great salvation, and you die and perish in your iniquity, man, you have lost everything! You are not merely like a bankrupt who has lost his gold, but you have lost yourself. I beseech you, therefore, listen to me as I cry to you, in my Master’s name, “‘Escape for thy life,’ your

immortal life, which is now in imminent danger.” Your existence will continue whether you are lost or saved, but your life!—have you yet received eternal life at the hands of God? Your life!—will you be content to lose it and to perish in your sin?

The worst point about this story is that, *if Lot had not escaped, he would have perished with the men of Sodom*. He could not endure them—he was vexed with their filthy conversation. How horrible, then, would it have been for him to perish with them! I cannot bear to think that some of you upright, moral people, may yet be lost.

You were never drunkards, and yet you will perish with the drunkards unless you repent and trust in Jesus. You were never swearers, but you will be as surely damned as the blasphemers will be unless you come to Christ. You cannot bear unchastity or filthiness of language—there is much about you that is most amiable and excellent—but even to you the Savior says, “Ye must be born again.” And if you are not born again, if you have no faith in Christ, if you are not converted so as to become as little children, you will as surely perish as will the worst of men.

You sometimes read in the newspaper a horrible story of vice and crime, and you wish that it had never been printed, and I wish the same. But what must it be for *you* to be shut up forever with such as those who commit these unmentionable abominations? Yet there are but two places for man’s eternal abode—heaven and hell—and if you are not saved so as to go to heaven, where can you go but into the same pit with all the multitude of transgressors who shall perish in their sins?

I wish that you who are outwardly moral and upright would think of this truth. It does seem to me as if I ought not further to press it upon you, for you are reasonable beings, you are not shut up in Bedlam. I pray you, therefore, run no longer such fearful risks as you have run hitherto but escape for your lives.

If Lot had been destroyed in the overthrow of Sodom, there would have been one thing about him which there would not have been about the race of the Sodomites, *he would have perished after having been warned*. When the fire-flakes began to fall and Lot felt the terrible burnings, he would have had this barbed dart driven into his heart—“I was bidden to escape. I was taken outside the city gate. I was led to a place of vantage and charged to escape for my life. Nobody else had that opportunity—nobody else in these cities was called thus to escape. I had a special appeal made to me by the messenger of God, and I refused it, and therefore I shall die a self-murderer, having chosen my own delusions.”

O sirs, O sirs, if you go from this Tabernacle to hell, it shall be hard work for you! If you will perish, I will be clear of your blood. As long as this voice can speak, I will plead with you that you do not destroy yourselves.

Look at the myriads of Africa, and the millions in China and India who have never heard the Gospel. I leave their future in the hands of God all merciful, but they cannot enter heaven. Neither can you. But there will be this about your doom, that you had the means of grace—you had the invitations of mercy, you had the expostulations of God’s Word, and you chose—you resolutely chose—to put far from you eternal life.

O God, You who have made these men and women, if they have lost their reason, give it back to them, and may Your sweet Spirit teach them now to judge righteously, and may they at once count it to be inevitable that every wise man should escape for his life and flee from the wrath to come!

I shall not detain you much longer, for surely I have said sufficient. Only this much must be added before I close. There was *a special favor in the case of Lot*, for Abraham had prayed for him. I should not wonder if some here present are receiving a warning from me just now because someone else has been praying for them.

Abraham had prayed for Sodom, and of course, especially for Lot, and therefore God’s messenger must go to bring Lot out of the doomed city. At this moment, while I am speaking, your mother is praying for *you*. While I am preaching, your wife is praying for *you*. Some of you have been made the subjects of special and particular prayer—you know that it is so.

She who is now in heaven never ceased to pray for you as long as she was here—and her many prayers—shall they not be answered now? They are undying prayers, though she who breathed them has long been dead—and they still live in the presence of God. Has He not sent His messenger on that account to bring you out of the City of Destruction?

Here! Here! Let me grasp your hand and let us together flee from the wrath to come and run to yonder cross, where there is safety, for none ever looked to the Christ that bled thereon and looked in vain. I feel impressed that there are some persons to whom this message is a peculiar answer to very special prayers that have gone up to God on their behalf.

This message will, I trust, come to them *as a special warning*, as the Lord’s messengers reached Lot in a mysterious way. How came those angels in Sodom to tell Lot to escape for his life? How very oddly people are brought where the message of salvation is proclaimed! You did not intend to be in the Tabernacle, tonight, did you? You had an engagement to be somewhere else, but here you are, and you have never been here before.

Yesterday you would not even have dreamt of being here tonight—but here you are. To what end are you here? God has in a mysterious way brought you here to look in the face of this man who cares for your soul and who says to you in the name of God, “I beseech you, escape for your life!”

Then, again, this message came to Lot *at a special time*—on the morning in which the city was to be destroyed. An hour later, it would have been too late. I sometimes feel an awful solemnity creeping over me as I stand in this place, because I know many things which I cannot tell you about the strange way in which God speaks here.

You remember that just before I went away for my rest, I told you the story of the godless young man who left his father’s house and was going to Australia, followed by his parents’ prayers. It was Sunday night—he was about to sail on Wednesday and he thought that he would spend the Sunday evening here in this house, as he knew that it would please his mother. Better still, it pleased God that night to touch his heart and we trust, to save his soul.

I put into the “Personal Notes” in *The Sword and the Trowel* for December, the letter that he wrote home to his parents telling them how God had met with their prodigal boy. That letter reached them only a few hours before a telegram arrived, saying that the vessel had been run into at Gravesend and the young man and five others had been drowned! Oh, what a mercy that, just a few hours before he had to meet his God, his God met with him!

I may be speaking to some others who are in just the same position, just on the borders of eternity—I cannot tell. You know that it is but two or three Sunday nights ago since one of our brothers sat over yonder, in the last pew in the middle. He came into the Tabernacle, covered his face for prayer, and died immediately. We had to delay the service, you recollect, while he was quietly carried away.

He was a child of God, but suppose it had been some of you? Suppose it were some of you tonight? What would become of you? God save you even now! Do not run any more risks. There is but a step between you and death, a step between you and hell if you are unbelievers. Therefore, escape for your lives, and escape tonight.

“Stay not for the morrow’s sun.”

God help you to have done with delaying and to feel that you must and will run away to the Lord Jesus Christ at once! Put your soul into His hands, and if you do, He gives you this guarantee, “None shall pluck you from my hands.” Your soul will be safe enough in His keeping. If I take my money to the bank, it is credited to my account. What do I do then? Do I loaf about and at last say to the clerk, “Is that money safe?” He would think that my mind was a little wandering.

Sometime ago there was a bank in France to which there came a man who had put in some thousand francs or so, and he said to the banker, “Have you got my thousand francs?” “Yes, certainly. Do you want the money out?” “I should like to see it,” he said. “Well, here is a thousand francs,” and he laid

them down before him on the counter. “Thank you,” he said, “I do not know that I want to take the cash away now—it is there alright, so I am satisfied.”

The next morning, he came in again and he wanted once more to see his money. I believe that the banker cut the connection and told him that he did not want such a customer as that to bank with him. If he could not trust the banker with his money, he had better take it home with him.

Now, if you cannot trust Christ with your souls, why, go and save yourselves. But if you can trust Christ, put away all those foolish doubts, and fears, and anxieties, and say—

*“Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I’ve committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.*

*“Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father’s face;
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.”*

Finally, the reason why the angel’s message had such power with Lot was that God Himself was in it. That gave it *a special pressure* and I have been praying that God Himself may be in my message now—that He may speak, gently speak, and powerfully speak to many of you. You will scarcely know why it is, but you will say, “I never felt like this before. I will arise and go unto my Father. I will repent of my sin. I will look to Jesus, the crucified Savior, God helping me! But why am I saying this? Why do I feel thus softened, I who used to be hard as steel? Why am I moved to this surrender of myself to my Savior?”

It will be the sweet Spirit of the blessed God gently working upon your heart and graciously inclining you to yield yourself to the Lord. I pray that it may be so, even now, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GENESIS 18:17-33 AND 19:12-28

Genesis 18:17-19. *And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

Abraham is called “the friend of God.” It was not merely that God was his Friend, that was blessedly true and it was a great wonder of grace, but he was honoured to be called “the friend of God”—one with whom God could hold sweet converse, a man after His own heart, in whom He trusted, to whom He revealed His secrets.

I am afraid there are not many men of Abraham’s sort in the world even now, but wherever there is such a man, with whom God is familiar, he will be sure to be one who orders his household aright. If the Lord is my Friend, and if I am indeed His friend, I shall wish Him to be respected by my children, and I shall endeavor to dedicate my children to His service.

I fear that the decline of family godliness, which is so sadly remarkable in these days, is the source of a great many of the crying sins of the age. The church of God at large would have been more separate from the world if the little church in each man’s house had been more carefully trained for God. If you

want the Lord to confide in you, and to trust you with His secrets, you must see that He is able to say of you what He said of Abraham, “He will command his children and his household after him.”

20-22. *And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.*

He was in no hurry to close that blessed interview—when he had once come into the Lord’s immediate presence, he lingered there. Those who are friends of God like to be much in their Lord’s company.

23. *And Abraham drew near,*

There is nothing like coming very close to God in prayer, “Abraham drew near.” He was about to use his influence with his great Friend, not for himself, but for these men of Sodom, who were going to be destroyed. Happy are those who, when they are near to God, use the opportunity in pleading for others, ay, even for the most wicked and abandoned of men.

23-25. *And said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

Abraham bases his argument upon the justice of God, and when a man dares to do that, it is mighty pleading, for depend upon it, God will never do an unjust thing. If you dare to plead His righteousness, His infallible justice, you plead most powerfully.

26-30. *And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty’s sake. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.*

This time the patriarch has advanced by ten, before, it was by fives. Pleading men grow bolder and braver in their requests. A man who is very familiar with God will, by and by, venture to say that which, at the first, he would not have dared to utter.

31-32. *And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty’s sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.*

He went no farther than to plead that Sodom might be spared if ten righteous persons could be found in it. I have heard some say that it was a pity Abraham did not go on pleading with God, but I would not dare to say so. He knew better when to begin and when to leave off than you and I do. There are certain restraints in prayer which a man of God cannot explain to others, but which he, nevertheless, himself feels. God moves his servants to pray in a certain case, and they do pray with great liberty and manifest power.

Another case may seem to be precisely like it, yet the mouth of the former suppliant is shut, and in his heart he does not feel that he can pray as he did before. Do I blame the men of God? Assuredly not, the Lord dealeth wisely with His servants, and He tells them, by gentle hints, which they quickly understand, when and where to stop in their supplications.

33. *And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.*

We know that the angels went down to Sodom, where they were received by Lot, and despitefully used by the Sodomites.

We will continue our reading at the twelfth verse of the next chapter.

Genesis 19:12. *And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:*

Let me bid every Christian man to look about him, among all his kith and kin, to see which of them yet remain unconverted. Let your prayers go up for them all, “Son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters.”

13-14. *For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.*

“The old man is in his dotage,” said they, “he always was peculiar, he never acted like the rest of the citizens. He came in here as a stranger, and he has always been strange in his behavior.”

15-16. *And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.*

I have always felt pleased to think that there were just hands enough to lead out these four people, Lot, and his wife, and their two daughters. Had there been one more, there would have been no hand to lay hold of the fifth person, but these two angels, with their four hands, could just lead these four persons outside the doomed city. God will always have agents enough to save his elect. There shall be sufficient Gospel preaching, even in the darkest and dearest times, to bring His redeemed out of the City of Destruction. God will miss none of His own.

17. *And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

Perhaps the old man’s legs trembled under him. He felt that he could not run so far, and beside, the mountain seemed so bleak and dreary, he could not quite quit the abodes of men.

18-21. *And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saying my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I wilt not overthrow this city, for thou hast spoken.*

I think that I have said to you before that this sparing of Zoar is an instance of the cumulative power of prayer. I may liken Abraham’s mighty pleading to a ton weight of prayer, supplication that had a wonderful force and power. Lot’s petition is only like an ounce of prayer. Poor little Lot, what a poor little prayer his was. Yet that ounce turned the scale.

So, it may be that there is some mighty man of God who is near to prevailing with God, but he cannot quite obtain his request. But you, poor feeble pleader that you are, shall add your feather’s weight to his great intercession and then the scale will turn. This narrative always comforts me. I think that Zoar was preserved, not so much by the prayer of Lot, as by the greater prayer of Abraham which had gone before. Yet the mighty intercession of the friend of God did not prevail until it was supported by the feeble petition of poor Lot.

22. *Haste thee, escape thither;*

The hand of justice was held back until God’s servant was safe. There can be no destruction of the world, there can be no pouring out of the last plagues, there can be no total sweeping away of the ungodly till, first of all, the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, and taken to a place of

security. The Lord will preserve His own. He lets the scaffold stand until the building is finished. Then, it will come down fast enough.

22-28. *For I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that, which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.*

What must Abraham’s meditations have been. What should be the meditations of every godly man as he looks towards Sodom and sees the smoke of its destruction? It might do some men great good if they would not persistently shut their eyes to the doom of the wicked.

Look, look, I pray you, upon that place of darkness and woe where every impenitent and unbelieving spirit must be banished forever from the presence of the Lord. Look till the tears are in your eyes as you thank God that you are rescued from so terrible a doom. Look till your heart melts with pity for the many who are going the downward road, and who will eternally ruin themselves unless almighty grace prevent.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—587, 520, 568, 1028

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